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ISRAEL HOLY TO JEHOVAH:

EXPOSITION OF LEVITICUS XVII.—XXII.

BY

W. KELLY.

LONDON:

G. M. T. WESTON, 53, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

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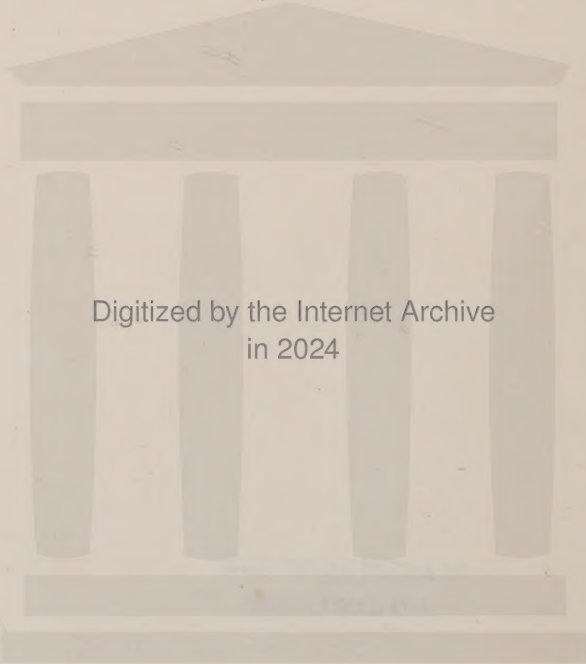
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ISRAEL HOLY TO JEHOVAH.

CHAPTER I.

ISRAEL HOLY TO JEHOVAH.

Lev. xvii. 1-9.

THE great day of atonement occupies the entire chap. xvi. of this book. We see its relation to the feasts of Jehovah in chap. xxiii. 26-32. But it also claims a distinct place, as Jehovah gave a special revelation with ample detail because of its independent importance, not more central in the book of Leviticus than in the ways of God, as shadowing that work of Christ on which, for a lost world as well as a people, all blessing depends, for Jews or Greeks or the church of God, for earth and heaven, for time and eternity.

Having already sought to expound that chapter by itself, however imperfectly but at least with simplicity and for practical use, I may now turn to the scriptures which follow, up to chap. xxiii., which may well call for a separate but briefer treatment. Each of these six chapters is devoted to divinely given regulations, to preserve the priests and the people of Israel from defilements to which they were exposed. It is not the offerings, as in Lev. i.-vii., nor the priests duly established and failing (Lev.

viii.-x.), or discharging their duties as to food, and the natural defilements and purification (xi.-xv.), ending with the day of atonement (xvi.). Here it is to guard priests and people from other defilements.

Let us now look into the portion before us.

“¹And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ²Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel and say to them, This [is] the thing which Jehovah hath commanded, saying, ³Every one of the house of Israel that slaughtereth an ox or sheep or goat in the camp, or that slaughtereth [it] out of the camp, ⁴and doth not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to offer [it] as an oblation to Jehovah before the tabernacle of Jehovah, blood shall be reckoned to that man : he hath shed blood ; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, ⁵to the end that the children of Israel bring their sacrifices which they sacrifice in the open field, that they bring them to Jehovah, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace-offerings to Jehovah. ⁶And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of Jehovah, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet savour to Jehovah. ⁷And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to demons (or hairy ones, satyrs) after whom they go a whoring. This shall be an everlasting statute to them for their generations. ⁸And thou shalt say to them, Every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that offereth a burnt-offering or sacrifice, ⁹and bringeth it not to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to offer it to

Jehovah; that man shall be cut off from his peoples" (vers. 1-9).

When God set the world that now is after the flood on the new condition of responsible government in man's hand, it was preceded by sacrifice; and the sweet savour was so acceptable, that Jehovah said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the thought of man's heart is evil from his youth. The very evil of man is the occasion of grace shown by Him, the unchanging God, Who used man's evil to bring out what He is in Himself, and is therefore incomprehensible save to faith. God thereon laid down that life belonged to God, and that man was bound to own His claim by not eating the blood. This principle was acknowledged by the apostles, elders, and brethren in Jerusalem, at the very assembly which vindicated the liberty of Gentile believers, but insisted on the restriction under Noah.

Here however it is not God dealing with man, but Jehovah instructing His priests and people in their peculiar relationship to Himself. It is the thing which Jehovah commanded every man of the house of Israel and no others; and it is here imposed on their wilderness estate. Whoever there slaughtered an animal for food without the camp must bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as an offering to Jehovah before His tabernacle. If not, blood was imputed to him; and because he shed blood without thus acknowledging Jehovah, his own life was forfeited: "that man shall be cut off from his people." It was an aban-

donment of Jehovah, and a denial of the ground on which he stood before Him. If he partook of animal food, he was bound to own, what the Gentiles that know not God had forgotten, that life belonged to Jehovah; He demanded the confession of the truth every time one took an animal's flesh for his food. Nor this only; but as He enjoined, solemnly before His tabernacle. Though for food, it was their duty to bring such to Jehovah and the priest as sacrifices; not of course as a sin-offering, but as expressive of communion with Him, sacrifices of peace-offerings to Jehovah.

Nor was the priest to fail on his side, but to sprinkle the blood upon the altar of Jehovah at the appointed place, and burn the fat for a sweet savour to Jehovah. Hence the profane and selfish wickedness of Eli's sons at a later day in the land, not only morally but in contempt of the law, even in the formal sacrifices and that which was exclusively Jehovah's right (1 Sam. ii. 12-25). As the people were not to count their part irksome but a privilege as Jehovah's people, so the priests were called cheerfully to sprinkle the blood and burn the fat on the altar. How due to Him! how happy and good for His people!

It was a needed safe-guard against idolatry too. For so inveterate a snare for man is it to turn aside to strange gods, that even here Jehovah deigns to notice the danger for His erring people. "And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goats (or, satyrs), after whom they go a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever to them throughout

their generations." So now that we as Christians rest on the one perfecting offering of Christ, it is our place and joy, whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, to do all to God's glory, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through Him. It is not only in offering up a sacrifice of praise to God, but as not forgetting to do good and communicate (*i.e.*, to share our goods with others); for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Verses 8 and 9 take in also the strangers that sojourned among the Israelites and denounce the evil of offering a burnt-offering or a sacrifice except at the one divinely assigned meeting-place with Jehovah. How sad for any in professing to own Jehovah with an offering to disregard His goodness in giving a place, and but one place, of outward access to Himself! How active and wily is the unseen foe in every thing, and not least in the ostensible worship of God to put scorn on the good and acceptable and perfect will of God! So it was in Israel then: so it has ever been, and with not less dismal success, in the church from near the first till our day.

For if there then was the dim and distant unity of the chosen nation urgently maintained when Jehovah brought them into the promised land, and distinctly when the temple was reared, how much more is the unity of God's family insisted on in the Gospel of John and the one body, the church, in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul! And how sad and humbling when Christians shirk their privileges as well as obligations, asking if it be

necessary to salvation. God's will and Christ's glory are concerned in it. Is this to be a secondary thing to him for whom God gave His Son? and whom He has sanctified by His Spirit unto obedience? Is not selfwill sin? and is it not all the worse because of God's immense grace to us? If we are His children as born of Him, yea His sons by faith in Christ, it surely becomes us to count no call of His on our subjection grievous. Let us remember that, as we are already through the gift of the Holy Spirit, in possession of our individual relationship to God, we are also brought into the one body of Christ. Let faith working by love act on this as a living and present reality. God has set us in our several place in the church. Our obligation is to recognise this with thanksgiving, and act on it without fear or doubt. "Whose (God's) house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6).

CHAPTER II.

EATING BLOOD PROHIBITED.

Lev. xvii. 10-16.

WHAT we have just had before us applies in its fulness only to the wilderness and the tabernacle there, in part even to the strangers that sojourned among them, wholly to the children of Israel as Jehovah's people of possession. The main prohibition of the closing verses (10-16) has a far wider bearing as the N. T. proves.

“¹⁰ And every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, that eateth any manner of blood—I will set my face against the soul that eateth the blood, and I will cut him off from among his people, ¹¹ for the life (or, soul) of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to atone for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. ¹² Therefore have I said to the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall the stranger who sojourneth among you eat blood. ¹³ And every one of the children of Israel, and of the strangers that sojourn among them, that catcheth in the hunt a beast or fowl which may be eaten, he shall pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with earth; ¹⁴ for as to the life of all flesh, its blood is the

life in it (or, for its life): and I have said to the children of Israel, Of the blood of no manner of flesh shall ye eat, for the life of all flesh is its blood: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off. ¹⁵ And every soul that eateth that which died [of itself] or that which was torn [by beasts, whether he be] home-born or a stranger, shall both wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the even; then he shall be clean. ¹⁶ But if he wash them not nor bathe his flesh, he shall also bear his iniquity" (vers. 10-16).

Thus did Jehovah impress on the heedless heart of man, that as human life was forfeited to God through sin, so He forbids the profane levity of turning the blood which is the natural life of earthly creatures into food. So had He enjoined after the deluge when liberty was first given to partake of flesh. The blood was strictly reserved for Himself. Even with natural animals, born to be taken and destroyed, and suitable for food, the claims of God must be maintained. This was long before the law, or even the fathers who had the promises. It was for those rescued from destruction, and standing on what Jehovah saw in the holocaust Noah offered on the altar. But when God thereon blessed Noah and his sons, who began the world that now is, while every moving thing that lived was now given for food as the green herb previously, "flesh with the life (or, blood) ye shall not eat." Man's life has a value attached to it never before declared; and the more because now for the first time it was for government responsible to God to

vindicate. "And surely your blood, [the blood] of your lives, will I require." Even if a mere animal with no reasonable soul slew a human creature, this was no reason to pass it by. "At the hand of every animal will I require it; at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. ix. 3-6).

These Noahic precepts were carried out further for the children under law; but they were divinely made known for the post-diluvian world. And when the judaising party in the early days of the church strove to bring the Gentiles under the law, God took care to maintain liberty from the law of Moses for such. The effort was made at Antioch, where the very name of Christian was first heard, by certain men who came down from Judæa, and taught that none could be saved, unless circumcised. Paul and Barnabas after no small discussion failed to settle the question, which was carried to the source of the dispute; and all came out before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. There Peter, giving a witness with no uncertain sound, asks why they tempted God by putting a yoke on the disciples "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord we shall be saved in like manner *as they also*," not merely shall they be saved even as we. Then Barnabas and Paul rehearsed what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them; and James summed up that which became

the decree of the apostles and the elders with the whole assembly, nay of the Holy Spirit Himself, to lay upon the Gentile confessors no other burden than these necessary things—"that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you" (Acts xv. 28, 29).

It surprises not a few that non-complicity with idols, and personal purity should be set with abstaining from eating blood and things strangled. The apostles did not reason on the ground of man's conscience; for grave a monitor as it is, it was then and it might be at any time darkened by public opinion and habits, which among Gentiles made as little of idolatry and personal purity as of using blood and strangled things for food. The revealed will of God is absolute for the believer; and as a fact His face was set against all these indulgences, entirely apart from the peculiar institutions of Israel. They have the full weight of apostolic authority as "necessary things": what can abrogate this expressly for those of the Gentiles that believe? and in pointed distinction from Levitical ordinances? God's honour is inviolate, and His sanction of marriage, not of fornication. God insists on the recognition that life belongs to Himself; so that, as He gives to eat of flesh, He reserves the blood and forbids eating of things strangled similarly; and the Christian is in no way to be indifferent even to these last injunctions, but bound to honour Him in both.

In Israel, as we see in these verses, to eat blood was to provoke Jehovah's jealousy to the cutting off of the offender: Israelites or strangers sojourning among them made no difference. It denied man's obligation to own the forfeit of life to God: for God was to be owned solemnly, if not on the altar, at least by pouring out the blood on the earth as due to Him, instead of appropriating it to one's own gratification. Death was a serious thing; and Jehovah would not have it slighted, even when He allowed His people to partake of flesh that had been killed for their food. But He would have them, on penalty of their own death, honour His claim of the blood as the sign of life given up to God, and in no way for man to make his food.

Yet there is marked distinction as ver. 15 shows between eating that which died of itself, or what was torn by beasts, "Whether he be home-born or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean till even; then he shall be clean." Here it was not the defiance of Jehovah's rights, as in deliberately planning to eat the blood which was forbidden; yet was it a want of zeal for God's word, and of adequate sense of relationship to Him, and uncleanness was incurred, with the command to purge oneself and one's surroundings before Him in the manner prescribed. If the defiled soul was indifferent to these mild terms of humiliation in the case, Jehovah was not mocked, and the soul which so despised Him "shall bear his iniquity."

Who that weighs these words can wonder at the

shock given to Jewish feeling by our Lord's words in John vi. 28? "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink." Granted, that His words were symbolical, as so often in this Gospel. Yet what symbol could be more startling? His person, His work, is the key to the truth. To eat blood under the law was to rebel against one's forfeited place, and to deal with the life that reverts and only belongs to God. But God now gives eternal life in His Son to every believer, and sent Him to die as propitiation for our sins. Grace changes all; and we despise the truth too, if we do not appropriate His death as the food of faith for our souls. But this in no way abrogates the fact that, in the full blaze of the N. T., the apostles under the Spirit's guidance call us to respect the outward token that life given up belongs to God.

CHAPTER III.

ISRAEL'S DUTY IN NATURAL RELATIONS.

Lev. xviii. 1-5.

HERE Aaron and his sons appear. Jehovah communicated to Moses what he was to charge on the people in general. They had left the house of bondage behind with its idols and impurities; they were to enter Canaan where and when the cup of the iniquity of the Amorites was full. They were a people redeemed externally at least, sheltered from divine judgment even in Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb, and delivered by divine energy through the Red Sea which swallowed up the world's adverse power. Yet were they meanwhile in the wilderness, but with Jehovah their leader on march, and dwelling in their midst wherever they sojourned.

His dealings up to Sinai were in pure grace (spite of constant unbelief and complaint). If they murmured at the bitter water after three days of thirst, Jehovah smote none but showed Moses that which made them sweet. When they murmured for hunger, Jehovah gave them bread from heaven and in double measure on the sixth day to mark the sabbath of rest. When again they murmured for water, Moses at Jehovah's call struck the rock

at Horeb, and water flowed abundantly. Then Amalek came and Joshua fought, but Israel, however assured, prevailed only while the hands of Moses were held up. The beautiful pledge of the Kingdom closes in righteous order. All changes in Exod. xix.; for Israel, instead of owning their utter weakness and pleading the promises of grace, boldly undertake to stand on their obedience of the law, *i.e.* on their own righteousness: the sure proof that they knew aright neither God nor themselves, the sad token of ruin ever to grow worse and worse.

Still there they were His people as no other nation was. His choice and their redemption were as plain facts as the judgment He had executed for their deliverance on the greatest of the then kingdoms of the earth. As such Jehovah had brought Israel to Himself; but confiding in themselves, they had accepted the condition of keeping His covenant for their standing and blessing. This became the basis of their obligations. They were in relationship with Him as His people on earth, with His law as the rule which bound them in all respects. Obedience is a duty; but to rest life or blessing on it was fatal. Law thus became for sinful man a ministry of death and condemnation.

“¹ And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, I [am] Jehovah your God. ³ After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, ye shall not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan whither I bring you, ye shall not do; neither shall ye walk in their

customs. ⁴ Mine ordinances shall ye do and my statutes shall ye observe to walk therein: I [am] Jehovah your God. ⁵ And ye shall observe my statutes and my judgments, by which the man that doeth them shall live: I [am] Jehovah " (vers. 1-5).

It is of all moment to apprehend that on this ground no sinner can live: he needs to be justified by faith in Jesus the only Saviour. For this reason the apostle in Gal. iii. 11, 12 quotes the last of these verses to set the position under law in contrast with faith. " But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident; for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but he that doeth them shall live by (or, in virtue of) them." Indeed he had already in ver. 10 laid down the still more sweeping sentence that " as many as are by (or, on the principle of) works of law are under curse," founding it on Deut. xxvii. 26. Let the reader weigh the striking fact here recorded. Silence is kept as to the blessings declared on mount Gerizim: all these were in vain. But the curses on mount Ebal stand in all their solemnity.

The law was given, not for sinful man to gain life thereby, but to learn that in such a way it was impossible. Law can only curse sinners, and sinners Israel and all men are. By faith the elders, like ourselves, obtained witness of being righteous; for faith ever rests, not on self but Christ, as Abel did and every saint that followed him. Before the law God gave promises of unconditional favour to the fathers; but the children forgot them, and

boldly undertook to live by obeying the law, and so, when they transgressed and rebelled as they did, increasingly incurred the curse. Such as looked on to the coming Messiah, renouncing self-confidence, and owning their sins, were justified by God's grace, even as the fathers. For when man fell, God revealed the Seed of woman as Satan's destroyer, the resource and object of faith.

The law was as absolutely right, as man and favoured Israel were thoroughly wrong. On the ground of law sinful man could only meet with death and condemnation. But man is blind both as to God and as to himself, and having no confidence in His grace, willingly accepts earning life by his well-doing. As he did not believe, he must learn to his cost that in the things of God he is as weak as he is ungodly (Rom. v. 9). Through law is not acquirement of righteousness but knowledge of sin (Rom. iii. 20). The law also works out wrath, and thereby the offence abounds. As the sting of death is the law, so is the law the power of sin. But Christ only is the Saviour whom God made sin for us in His atoning death; which glorified God even as to sin, and left Him free to display His grace to the uttermost for all that believe on His Son.

Hence the Christian rests in a new righteousness, not man's as Israel pretended to and are now suffering the consequence of their failure, and yet more for rejecting their own Messiah. It is now God's righteousness apart from law that is manifested, God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all (Gentile no less than Jew), and

upon all that believe (whoever they be and whatever they may have been); for there is no difference, let the unbelieving pride of man conceive what it will on its own behalf. For all sinned and do come short of God's glory: being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth a propitiatory through faith in His blood, unto showing forth His righteousness because of the passing over (or, prætermision of) the sins that had been before in His forbearance; for showing His righteousness in the present time that He might be just and justifier of him that is of faith in Jesus (Rom. iii. 21-26). Thus was boasting excluded. The Christian confesses his ruin by sin and his own sins, but has faith in Him Who suffered once for sins that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. iii. 18).

Hence too Christian responsibility is not less real than the Israelite's, but is wholly different. He has life eternal in Christ Who gives it to him; he comes not into judgment which Christ bore for him; and he has passed from death into life. The blood of Christ has cleansed him from every sin, so that he knows himself white as snow in God's sight. He is God's son through faith in Christ Jesus, and sealed with the Holy Spirit given to him, crying, Abba, Father. He is a member of Christ's body in union with the heavenly Head. All this and more create a responsibility not only altogether distinct from that of Israel, but far beyond what the saints had before Christ's redemption and the gift of the indwelling Spirit. For duties depend on

relationship; and as the Christian is by grace brought into an entirely new place in Christ, so are we expressly regarded (Eph. ii. 10) as created in Him for good works, prepared before that we should walk in them. The measure and character of Israel's place, excellent as it was, is wholly short of and quite different from ours.

But we may notice in the prefatory words of our chapter how Israel were warned against the doings of both Egypt and Canaan. They were far from deriving a single good institution from the one they left or the other among whom they came. Jehovah's ordinances and statutes they were to observe and walk in: the man that did these should live. When in fact they turned from Him in disobedience, the evil ways of those both were their utter ruin.

CHAPTER IV.

ABHORRENT MIXTURE OF RELATIONS.

Lev. xviii. 6-18.

THE divine prohibition in this portion of our chapter refers to near relations and rests simply on the divine will and authority: "I am Jehovah." Marriage was not, save at the beginning, to unite "one's own flesh," naturally united or near already.

"⁶None of you shall approach to all (or, any) flesh of his flesh to uncover nakedness: I [am] Jehovah. ⁷The nakedness of thy father, and the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover (she [is] thy mother); thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. ⁸The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it [is] thy father's nakedness. ⁹The nakedness of thy sister, daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, born at home or born abroad, their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. ¹⁰The nakedness of thy son's daughter or of thy daughter's daughter, their nakedness thou shalt not uncover; for theirs [is] thy nakedness. ¹¹The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father (she [is] thy sister), thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. ¹²The nakedness of thy father's sister shalt thou not uncover; she [is] thy father's own flesh.

¹³ The nakedness of thy mother's sister shalt thou not uncover; for she [is] thy mother's own flesh.

¹⁴ The nakedness of thy father's brother shalt thou not uncover; thou shalt not approach his wife: she [is] thine aunt.

¹⁵ The nakedness of thy daughter-in-law shalt thou not uncover (she [is] thy son's wife); thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

¹⁶ The nakedness of thy brother's wife shalt thou not uncover; it [is] thy brother's nakedness.

¹⁷ The nakedness of a woman and her daughter shalt thou not uncover; thou shalt not take her son's daughter, nor her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness (they [are] her own flesh): it [is] wickedness. ¹⁸ And thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex [her] (or, be a rival), to uncover her nakedness, beside her during her life" (vers. 6-18).

The opening is singularly emphatic, "Man, man, &c." This the Septuagint follows closely. Man's attention is called for. Marriage is only honourable where God's will is observed. Heb. xiii. 4 in no way sanctions or sanctifies a forbidden union. The true rendering is, Let marriage be honourable (not "among all" as the Revisers say, but) "in all things," and the bed be undefiled. The construction is alike before and after. It is an injunction, not an affirmation as in the A.V. with Wiclif, Cranmer, and the Geneva translators. The Rhemish is an ungrammatical evasion, meant to correspond with the Vulgate, which would seem to take the Greek like the Peschito, Wiclif, &c. Tyndale alone was right. Against unions or

licences, such as are here indicated, Jehovah sets His face. His name from beginning to end of the chapter is the solemn warrant against them all. If an Israelite allowed passion to carry him away, it was rebellion against Jehovah and at his own peril.

But in these near relationships marriage was unnatural and dishonorable in the measure of the nearness. And that intercourse which was proper to the married tie, forbidden in every case outside it, was here sinful and shameful in the highest degree, whether in the superior place of father or mother, and the nearest on either side, or in the equal one of sister howsoever born, or in the inferior one of daughter-in-law. And who would be bold enough to deny that the corresponding ones, not here specified, are not really implied? It is the man who is here prohibited: surely the woman is so no less. Further, the prohibition goes beyond blood-relations and extends in like degree to those by marriage connexion. Of great moment it was to cultivate the warmest affection between all that stood together in near kin or connexion. But still more was it essential that their mutual love should be ordered in all purity.

There was a marked exception requisite to keep up tribal inheritance in Israel, which though existing elsewhere applied to no other people as to them, still less to a Christian; a Levirate or brother-in-law marriage. It was when a man died childless, and his brother or next of kin was called to raise up seed to the deceased, the aim being to bind up the family line and the inheritance; so

much this, that if the nearer kinsman refused, the widow was entitled publicly to loose his shoe and spit in his face.

Verse 17 shows that the prohibition goes beyond this to the incongruous and unnatural intercourse with a woman and her daughter, or her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, though all strangers to him. And verse 18 forbids an Israelite to have two sisters together, for the reason assigned. Christianity goes to the root of the matter by recalling, as our Lord did, to what was at the beginning when God made one man and one woman. If a man lost his wife by death, he was not only free to marry another but might find it his duty for the children's sake or his own.

CHAPTER V.

OTHER ABOMINATIONS FORBIDDEN.

Lev. xviii. 19-30.

BUT there is uncleanness through other causes, and viler abominations contrary to nature, against which Jehovah warns. It may be painful to read ; but it is wholesome to learn what human nature fell into among heathen races so civilized as in Egypt and Canaan ; and God knew that His people, when slighting His word, might follow them both.

“¹⁹ And thou shalt not approach a woman in the separation of her uncleanness to uncover her nakedness. ²⁰ And thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife to become unclean with her. ²¹ And thou shalt not give of thy seed to let them pass through [the fire] to Molech, nor shalt thou profane the name of thy God : I [am] Jehovah. ²² And thou shalt not lie with mankind as one lieth with womankind : it [is] abomination. ²³ And thou shalt not lie with any beast to become unclean therewith ; and a woman shall not stand before a beast to lie down therewith : it [is] confusion. ²⁴ Make not yourselves unclean in any of these things ; for in all these have made themselves unclean the nations which I cast out from before you. ²⁵ And the land hath become unclean : and I

visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out its inhabitants." ²⁶ But ye shall observe my statutes and my judgments, and shall not do any of all these abominations,—the home-born and the stranger that sojourneth among you ²⁷ (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, who [were] before you, and the land hath been made unclean); ²⁸ that the land vomit not you out also, when ye make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹ For whosoever shall do any of these abominations, the souls that do [them] shall be cut off from among their people. ³⁰ Therefore shall ye observe my charge, that ye do not [any] of these abominable customs which were done before you; and ye shall not make yourselves unclean therein: I [am] Jehovah your God " (19-30).

Here is a somewhat different character of defilement, but leading on to still viler abominations, on none of which need one dwell, though assured God is wise and holy in every word He lays down. Indeed the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 4) calls the Christian Jews, and in principle all concerned, to take heed, in terms which take in verses 19, 20 of our chapter. Marriage is to be honourable in all respects, as well as among all of course. Christian light and love is meant to pervade even the most intimate of relationships, and cleanse from every defilement of flesh and spirit; of Jews and of Gentiles we need to be reminded that the Lord is the avenger of all such wrongs.

Then we have a transition from wives to chil-

dren, and that most inhuman rite in which parents were so blinded of Satan as to devote their offspring sacrificially to Molech or Moloch, and probably Malcham or Milcom. It was the tutelary God of the Ammonites; and Chemosh, the deity of the Moabites, differed little from it, Fürst making the name signify "fire," as Molech, etc., mean "King." From Jer. xix. 5 it appears that Baal was worshipped thus. It was widespread under various idols over the earth; and how awful the fact that Solomon yielded to his heathen wives, and went after Ashtoreth, the licentious goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom or Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, and built a high place for Chemosh, that of Moab! The greatest science and learning, the highest civilization and luxury, can in no way hinder this, if they do not help it on; and the day hastens, when the Jews, now so staunch apparently against every idol, will fall under strange gods, and set up a man as God in His temple, drawing apostate Christendom into this fatal revolt, all the more guilty on the part of those called to worship the Father and the Son in Spirit.

This verse 21 is but one of many solemn prohibitions of a horror, which prevailed down to Josiah's days, as Ahaz was a notable patron of it long before. Some have reasoned on "passing through the fire," as here and elsewhere, to deny the burning of their seed: but this seems a kindly effort to soften the reality of the wickedness. It was the fullest, though not the only, profanation of the name of Israel's God. Jehovah accepted a sheep

or an ox, or even a much smaller sacrifice ; Satan under these names demanded their sons.

The unnatural brutalities of verses 22, 23, are plain enough ; but it may not be known how unblushingly they were perpetrated among the heathen, even by the Greeks and the Romans. What abomination ! It is confusion, says Jehovah. Israel were not to render themselves unclean in any of these things, as in all these did the nations of Canaan which He cast out before them. How much guiltier, if so, would Israel be ! The very land was made unclean. Therefore had He visited the iniquity on it. Earth vomited out its inhabitants ; so that Israel must beware, not only for themselves, but for any stranger sojourning among them, lest the land should vomit them out, as it had the nations that dwelt there before Israel. For such evil was intolerable in His eyes, and yet more offensive in His own people than in any other : a truth forgotten soon among the Jews, as later in Christendom. “ Therefore shall ye observe my charge that ye do not [any] of the abominable customs which were done before you, and that ye make not yourselves unclean therein : I [am] Jehovah your God.” It is by receiving the good that is from God, His word and above all His Christ, that souls are kept from evil.

CHAPTER VI.

ISRAEL'S PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Lev. xix. 1-13.

OUR chapter begins a varied application of the law to Israel, both Godward and manward. This was divine wisdom. It was excellent to have His will as to the earthly people as a whole or summary; not less valuable was it for them to have its several parts in suitable connexion. There is no vain repetition anywhere, though those who count themselves able to sit in judgment of His word are necessarily incapable of entering into the truth. For man only learns it through his need and in a spirit of faith, dependence, and obedience. Indeed it would deny God and His majesty if it could be in any other way.

“¹And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ²Speak to all the assembly of the children of Israel, and say to them, Ye shall be holy, for I Jehovah your God [am] holy. ³Ye shall reverence every man his mother, and his father, and ye shall keep my sabbaths: I [am] Jehovah your God. ⁴Ye shall not turn to idols, and ye shall not make to yourselves molten gods: I [am] Jehovah your God. ⁵And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace-offerings to Jehovah, ye shall offer it for your acceptance. ⁶It shall be eaten

on the day when ye sacrifice it, and on the morrow; and that which remaineth to the third day shall be burned with fire. ⁷And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it is an unclean thing (or, abomination), it shall not be accepted. ⁸And he that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, for he hath profaned the holy thing of Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his peoples. ⁹And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field; and the gleaning of thy harvest thou shalt not gather. ¹⁰And thy vineyard shalt thou not glean, neither shalt thou gather the scattered grapes of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger: I [am] Jehovah your God. ¹¹Ye shall not steal, and ye shall not deal falsely, and ye shall not lie one to another. ¹²And ye shall not swear by my name falsely and profane the name of thy God; I [am] Jehovah. ¹³Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of the hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning " (vers. 1-13).

It is not here the abominable things against which they were warned, but the good inculcated because of their relation to Jehovah: what they should do, rather than what they should not, though this continues here and there to have its place still. So the chapter begins with a word and principle applied by the apostle Peter to the Christian Jews he addressed, as it is far more deeply true in Christianity; "be ye holy, for I am holy." As woman so largely figured through the corrupt lusts of fallen

nature in the chapter before, and even to unnatural vileness, it is striking that here we begin with, "Ye shall reverence every man his mother, and his father, and my sabbaths ye shall keep: I am Jehovah your God." The mother has the first place in singular contrast with the slight of woman and the pride of man characteristic of the Talmud for modern Judaism. Of course the father is in no way forgotten, and if remembered would have his place of just authority. It is worthy of note that Jehovah adds here, "and my sabbaths shall ye keep." The sabbath was not a moral duty, but of divine authority; and hence of all moment as a question of relationship with Jehovah and therefore the sign of His people Israel. If we as Christians own the Lord's day, Israel will truly honour the sabbath in the age to come when Jehovah reigns. How pithily contempt is poured on "molten gods" in ver. 4!

Peace-offerings are next guarded; for man there had a large place, and danger was nigh. It is well when holiness guards our joy; but it is evanescent. Hence it could not be eaten on the third day without iniquity, and profanation (5-8). Man's eating even with a thankful heart must be kept near the offering to God.

Jehovah would also train His people in gracious feeling. If He would bless their harvest and their vintage, He inculcates kindness to the needy, and instructs them to leave a margin of their good crop, and the scattered or fallen grapes, for the poor and the stranger. Such had once been their own lot in

the land of Egypt; but the ground is Himself, Jehovah their God (9, 10).

Dishonesty and untruthfulness He prohibits, especially with the profanation of His name; and He denounces oppression of one's neighbour, were it but in delaying for a single night to pay what was due to a poor labourer. Wealthy Jews were guilty in this way: is it confined to men of Israel? Vers. 11-13 are of great weight. The employment of labour is often conducted in a hard spirit, grinding the faces of the poor. It is no compensation but rather an aggravation in God's eyes for masters to give liberally to so-called Christian or to philanthropic objects what is wrung out of tears and curses. And what has not trade or commerce to answer for in the oppressive desire to grow rich?

CHAPTER VII.

ISRAEL'S PRACTICAL HOLINESS.

Lev. xix. 14-18.

ANOTHER duty is here urged, considerateness for such as through natural infirmity are liable not only to err but to have advantage taken of them by the lightminded or the malicious. Other warnings are given that an Israelite might behave to his brother as became the people of Jehovah. His fear was to govern all the life, individually or together. Righteousness in judgment is insisted on, irrespective of low or high. Tale-bearing is frowned on: who could tell the mischief that might result? Hatred in the heart is the deep wrong against a brother; but it is immediately urged earnestly to rebuke one's neighbour that one bear not sin on his account (or, bring not sin on them). In short, no allowance of grudge, or self-vengeance, but to love one's neighbour as oneself.

“¹⁴Thou shalt not curse (or, revile) a deaf [person] nor put a stumbling-block before a blind one, but thou shalt fear thy God: I [am] Jehovah. ¹⁵Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the lowly, nor honour the person of the mighty; in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. ¹⁶Thou shalt not

go about a tale-bearer among thy people ; nor shalt thou stand against the blood (or, life) of thy neighbour : I [am] Jehovah. ¹⁷Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart ; thou shalt earnestly rebuke thy neighbour, lest thou bear sin on account of him. ¹⁸Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : I [am] Jehovah " (vers 14-18).

We may view these injunctions as a class, and even from ver. 11. But it is well to observe that moral and ceremonial are expressly flowing together side by side, both founded on the revealed name of Jehovah, Whose honour is at the head of all, and Whose dishonour was more deadly and detestable than any other sin. It must and ought to be so, if He, the living God chose Israel to be His people, and Israel gladly owned Jehovah as their God, the one true God. And beautiful it is to note how He deigns to guide them in all the details of life, civil as well as religious, as their moral Governor : for so it really was.

Israel was in obvious contrast with the long abnormal time which stretched from man driven out of paradise till the deluge was sent on the race left to its self, and his so-called free-will ended in corruption and violence, greatly aggravated by the fallen angels, as Gen. vi. tells us, interpreted (if we needed it) by 2 Peter and Jude. It was now in Israel, apart from all nations, brought out of Egypt, led through the wilderness, and established in Canaan under a divine government which compre-

hended all the people in their relation with Jehovah and with one another, and strangers too, with the utmost minuteness. Love would delight in it as showing His deep interest in them; self-knowledge would gratefully own His wisdom and their need. Insubjection to Him could only if distinct and unjudged bring death, as obedience was met by His manifested blessings.

Yet we must never forget that it necessarily and wholly differs from Christianity, which sprang from the sovereign grace of God in honour of His Son, after the Jew scornfully and with hatred refused Him—the end of their wicked history as a responsible people. So Isaiah had prophesied, disclosing first their captivity in Babylon for their idolatry (chaps. xl.-xlviii.); next, the irretrievable ruin as far as they were concerned by the rejection of their Messiah (chaps. xlix.-lvii). But his last chaps. (lviii.-lxvi.) prove no less certainly, that divine mercy will restore them to unfailing better blessing for the elect remnant, who will become His strong and honoured and holy people, when the Lord appears in power and glory for His world-kingdom (Rev. xi. 15).

Christianity, and the church of which Christ is the glorified head, come in after His cross and ascension, and before He comes to receive the saints destined for the heavenly places. Christ as revealed in the written word is their rule of life, and the Holy Spirit sent forth is their power, in faith working by love, on the ground of Christ's redemption and their deliverance by His death and resurrection.

Hence, while taught to appreciate the faith and walk, the service and the worship of saints from Abel all through the O.T., there is in Christ a quite new standard of walk and worship. Also we are called to suffer for righteousness and Christ's name, to love our enemies, and to lay down our lives for the brethren, as no Jew was. Hence the N.T., which not only confirms the Old but reveals God's secrets, that were not then revealed to the fathers or their children, as they are now by the Spirit to the glory of the Father and the Son.

It could not but be that these wondrous counsels of God, when the cross of Christ and His exaltation furnished the fit moment for making them known to His children, introduced wholly new ways both in the individual Christian and in the church as a whole. Alas! as they were the last to be revealed, they were the first to evaporate when the apostles departed to be with Christ. The Fathers so styled, the sub-apostolic Fathers, as far as we have their remains, are the clearest proof of the then fall from the grace and truth which came through our Lord Jesus. The heavenly things are thereby eclipsed. The very righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel is ignored, clouded, or debased. What could be expected of their knowledge in the mystery of Christ and of the church? of its standing, or of its hope?

It thus appears that time is a vast parenthesis between eternity before it and eternity to follow, in which the earth and Israel with the other nations fill the scene as in the O.T. Within that paren-

thesis comes another, turning on Christ's rejection and exaltation on high, and the revelation of the great mystery concerning Christ, and concerning the church united to Him by the Spirit already, but awaiting His coming for heavenly glory and their reign with Him over the earth. Restored Israel will be blessed, at the head of all the nations here below, under the new covenant and the Messiah till eternity begins.

It is the new age which has had no recognition from the accredited guides of Christendom, who fall into the error that Israel had lost its place for ever that the Gentile might go on conquering and to conquer till the whole world was brought under the rule of Christ by the gospel and the church. But this was a total misconception on God's revealed mind. The apostle Paul had formally warned against the notion in Rom. xi. Not only is it there laid down that the tenure of the Gentile rests on a responsibility similar to that of Israel, and contingent on abiding in goodness, but it is declared categorically that on its failure the Gentile is to be cut off as the Jew had been before. And prophecy is cited to prove that, when the fulness of the nations is come, Israel shall be saved as a whole. "According as it is written, The deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant from me to them, when I shall have taken away their sins." Hence the apostle explains, As regards the gospel, they are enemies on account of us Gentiles who now believe; but as regards election,

beloved on account of the patriarchal fathers ; and this on an indisputable ground : “ for the gifts and calling of God are not subject to a change of mind.” For as ye [Gentiles] once disobeyed God, but now were shewn mercy through their disobedience, so these also [Israel] disobeyed your mercy, in order that they too may be shewn mercy. For God shut together the whole of them into disobedience, that he might show mercy to the whole.

This wondrous display of mercy to God’s glory (to say nothing of the portion of the glorified in heaven) is necessary to fulfil the prophets, and establish His kingdom universally here below for a new age, after the present evil age is closed by divine judgments, and before eternity begins. Where it is not believed, there must be a gap left, which is in vain covered up by forcing the scriptures into a reluctant squeeze, some into this age, and others into the eternal scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

ISRAEL'S HOLINESS.

Lev. xix. 19-37.

It is remarkable that here they are called to observe Jehovah's statutes, when three prohibitions are laid on Israel of a seemingly minor importance, not moral like that which follows.

“¹⁹ Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind; thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed; nor shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together. ²⁰ And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman that [is] a bondmaid betrothed to a husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her: there shall be punishment; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. ²¹ And he shall bring his guilt-offering unto Jehovah to the door of the tent of meeting, a ram for a guilt-offering. ²² And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt-offering before Jehovah for his sin which he hath sinned, and he shall be forgiven for his sin which he hath sinned. ²³ And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as their uncircumcision: three years shall they be as uncircumcised to you; it shall not be eaten. ²⁴ But in

the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy for giving praise unto Jehovah. ²⁵ And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield to you the increase thereof: I [am] Jehovah your God.

Ye shall not eat [anything] with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantments, nor practise augury.

²⁷ Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, nor shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. ²⁸ Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I [am] Jehovah.

²⁹ Profane not thy daughter to make her a harlot; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of enormity. ³⁰ Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I [am] Jehovah.

³¹ Turn ye not to those that have familiar spirits, nor to the wizards; seek them not to be defiled by them: I [am] Jehovah, your God. ³² Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I [am] Jehovah. ³³ And if a stranger sojourn with thee in

your land, ye shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be to you as the homeborn among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I [am] Jehovah your God. ³⁵ Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. ³⁶ Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I [am] Jehovah your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt. ³⁷ And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I [am] Jehovah ” (vers. 19–37).

Peremptorily, but in wisdom, was divine order impressed, and mixture of different kinds forbidden. He is a faithful Creator, and gave to each creature its species. Hence as it was sin to separate what He joined, it was not less to join what He separated. Their cattle must gender according to the respective kind; their field must not be sown with different kinds of seed; nor was a garment woven of two materials to come on the Israelite. To the Christian the words are full of importance. It was Satan that sowed darnel with the wheat; and the Spirit warns against every incongruous communion (2 Cor. vi). There must be no diverse yoking with unbelievers, no touching what is unclean, no compromise of truth by mixed principles. In matters of this life compromise is amiable and right; but where God's will is in question, it is a ruse of the devil.

The case that is next provided for (vers. 20-22) supposes the imperfect state which the law contemplates; for if she had been free, death was the penalty. But being a bondwoman and espoused, she was scourged, and he brought a guilt or trespass-offering; by which ram the priest made atonement, and the sin was forgiven. Jew or Greek, bond or free, is all gone now: Christ abides for faith.

Again, it was the day of earthly things; but Jehovah would have His people bear in mind the ruin of the earth through man's sin. A full time must pass during which the fruit of their planted trees lay "as uncircumcised unto them"; the fourth year "all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise

Jehovah"; after which they are free to eat, "that it may increase to you its produce." It is the right principle of the first-fruits for Jehovah (vers. 23-25). God's rights have the first place.

Then not only is the eating of anything with the blood forbidden, but enchantments and auguries, and heathenish ways in trimming of heads and beards, cutting of the flesh and tattooing, as opposed to Jehovah. So too the devoting of a daughter to whoredom, as not immoral only but "profane." So as His sabbaths were to be kept, and His sanctuary revered, they were to shun necromancers and soothsayers as polluting (vers. 26-31). The same authority of Jehovah, which proscribed those heathen enormities, calls for honour to the hoary head and the face of the old man, coupling them with the fear of "thy God" (32). And what strikingly cuts off by anticipation the narrow and base pride of the Talmud, "a stranger" that might sojourn in their land was, not only to be allowed there unmolested, but to be loved as one born among them. "Thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I [am] Jehovah your God" (33, 34). How touching to remember their oppression in Egypt, not for resentment but for compassion!

Lastly, strict equity is enjoined in all dealings of trade and commerce. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measure of length, in weight, and in measure of capacity: just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have: I [am] Jehovah your God, that

brought you out of the land of Egypt" (36). It is a great aggravation, because it is not transient but deliberate wrong, when the scales and weights are unfair, when solids and liquids have a falsified criterion. "Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes and all my judgments, and do them: I [am] Jehovah" (37). The least things of daily life fall under His eye.

One of the prevalent errors in Christendon is to confound the divine aim of Israel's calling with that that is by the gospel and in His church. The one was His kingdom regulated by the law, which failed utterly through the disobedience and at length apostasy of that people. But now in Christ rejected and glorified above the centre is transferred from earth to heaven, man as he is is treated as lost, and if any one be in Christ, as all saints now are, it is a new creation: the old things are passed; behold, new things are come in; and all things are of the God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

It is not therefore an effort to achieve the moral improvement of mankind, nor the hope still less of incorporating all the nations in one body, a contradiction of both letter and spirit, but all to Christ as head over all things to the church which is His body, already united to Him by the Holy Spirit, and about to join Him on high at His coming for an administration of the fulness of the times, when all things shall be summed, or headed, up in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the

earth, in whom we were allotted our portion, for we are not the mere inheritance, but heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The church is to share His heavenly and earthly glories.

Israel on earth under Messiah and the new covenant will manifest the law written on their heart. No longer under the law and the yet deeper guilt of rejecting Messiah to their own long rejection, they will be the theatre here below, as His blessed earthly nation, of manifesting to all families the happiness of a people that is in such a case, the happy people whose God is Jehovah; and thus the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

But our calling is to be delivered from the present evil age, and to be blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, while sharing His reproach and shame on earth, and waiting for Him to come and receive us to Himself in the Father's house.

CHAPTER IX.

ISRAEL'S PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

Lev. xx. 1-8.

As the preceding chapter insisted on what was good and comely as became the people of Jehovah and in His name, the solemn and sufficient authority for every requirement, so in our chapter it is chiefly a guard against the evils, often enormous and unnatural, to which Israel was exposed through contact with their idolatrous neighbours. The cruel rites of infanticide is the first to be denounced; it was practised by the Ammonites on this side and by the Phœnicians on that, and so by the Carthaginians and others too, who boasted loudly of their civilization.

“¹And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ²Thou shalt say also to the children of Israel, Every one of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth of his seed to Molech shall certainly be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed to Molech, so as to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. ⁴And if the people of the land in any way hide their eyes

from that man, when he giveth of his seed to Molech, that they kill him not, ⁵Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. ⁶And the soul that turneth to necromancers and to soothsayers, to go a whoring after them, I will set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. ⁷Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I [am] Jehovah, your God. ⁸And ye shall observe my statutes and do them: I [am] Jehovah who sanctify you" (vers. 1-8).

Nothing more profoundly marks the difference between God's word and men's thoughts in all ages than their levity as to idols and strange gods, and His abhorrence of it, especially in His own people. It may not be any deliberate intention to abandon His worship; it may only be, what they count a venial thing, occasional conformity to idolatry while still professing His name. But God rejects absolutely any such unhallowed compromise, quite apart from the danger, for those who allow it, of utter revolt from Him. It strikes at His majesty, at holiness and truth, and is intolerable in His eyes.

The Israelite ought to have known that it was from out of this abomination that Abraham was chosen and called as a separate witness, he and his seed, to the one true and living God (Joshua xxiv. 3). Every child of his was bound at all cost to be faithful on pain of forfeiting, not only all his

privileges, but his life. Not Israel only was bound : the strangers that sojourned in their midst were under the same obligation. Whoever devoted his offspring to Molech must die by the ignominious death of stoning ; and this to make the people of the land take their active part in personally executing the sentence. In this and no other way was the idolater to be put to death, that all around might share His horror and clear themselves of the evil.

Still more impressive is the repeated intimation in vers. 3 and 5 that Jehovah sets His face against that man and will cut him off, because such wickedness defiles His sanctuary and profanes His holy Name. It is not the cruel barbarity toward their own children, or the children of others, into which Satan loved to draw those who worshipped false gods that were no God. But God must abdicate His own glory and being if such a sin could be passed over without His avenging the insult by the hands of Israel. Even such as shut their eyes to spare the guilty exposed themselves to the like doom (4, 5).

No doubt the Christian is entirely apart from the legal system and is called to the relationship of a son with the Father in total separation from the world. He belongs to the Lord Jesus who laid the foundation of Christianity in the cross whereon He bore our sins and suffered, Just for unjust. He is united to Him, rejected by Jew and Gentile, and glorified above on the Father's throne, and has thus the characteristic stamp of heavenly grace, as

he waits for His coming to take him there. But when the Lord returns (and all His saints with Him in power and glory) to be King over all the earth, He will execute judgment on every evil, and destroy the wicked from before Him; while man universally consigns every idol to the moles and to the bats. They shall be utterly abolished, and false gods (real demons) lead astray no more for ever, even though Satan may still remain (restrained for a thousand years from mischief) to be finally punished at the end. But Jesus shall reign in righteousness and peace; and we shall reign with Him over the earth where we suffered with Him.

Nor is it only such an enormity as that of Molech. Turning after necromancers or such as had familiar spirits, and soothsayers or wizards, came under the same unsparing judgment of Jehovah (ver. 6): "I will set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from his people." How awful for professing Christians to tamper with such profanity! If Israel as an earthly people had thus to sanctify themselves and be holy, as under law, how much more have Christians under grace, who have Christ and all the written word their standard, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, to obey and please their God and Father!

CHAPTER X.

ISRAEL'S PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

Lev. xx. 9-21.

THE first place is given, as is meet, to heinous rebellion against Jehovah in an Israelite or a sojourner in their midst. This is followed up by an awfully dark list of enormous wickedness, which opens with reviling one's father and mother. Setting up one's own will against a parent's authority is akin in a lower way to renouncing the true God for a false one. Hence it is that not a few connect ver. 9 with the preceding paragraph rather than with the subsequent one. Indeed the "For" with which it begins, if so rendered, goes to support it. On the other hand, revolt from Jehovah makes a good division.

"⁹ For everyone that curseth (or, revileth) his father and his mother shall surely be put to death; he hath cursed his father and his mother; his blood is upon him. ¹⁰ And a man that committeth adultery with a man's wife, that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. ¹¹ And a man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood [is] upon them. ¹² And

if a man lie with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have wrought confusion; their blood [is] upon them. ¹³ And if a man lie with a male, as he with a woman, both of them have committed abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood [is] upon them. ¹⁴ And if a man take a wife and her mother, it [is] enormity (or, incest) with fire shall they burn him and them, that there be no enormity among you. ¹⁵ And if a man lie with a beast for copulation, he shall surely be put to death; and ye shall kill the beast. ¹⁶ And if a woman approach unto any beast to gender with it, thou shalt kill the woman and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood [is] upon them. ¹⁷ And if a man take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness and she see his nakedness, it [is] a disgrace: and they shall be cut off before the eyes of the sons of their people. He hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸ And if a man shall lie with a woman in her infirmity, and uncover her nakedness, he hath laid naked her flux, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood; and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. ¹⁹ And the nakedness of thy mother's sister and of thy father's sister thou shalt not uncover; for he hath laid naked his own flesh (or, near of kin): they shall bear their iniquity. ²⁰ And if a man lie with his aunt, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. ²¹ And if a man take his brother's wife, it is un-

cleanness; he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness: they shall be childless" (vers. 9-21).

Here then we commence with open and base dishonour to one's parents, which was to be punished with death. And the same sentence is pronounced upon the nearest and deepest wound one man can inflict on another, a sin not foully wrong only, but in despite of Jehovah who instituted married union from the beginning. His law was as extreme against these sins, as against what denied Himself.

But greater impurity prevailed among the heathen, and especially those who occupied the promised land. The sons of Israel too were soon to be exposed to their shameless example. He who gave them Canaan knew their hearts far better than they themselves did. Hence these solemn and painful denunciations of incest, &c. Flesh is the same root of vileness in a Jew as in a Gentile. Restraint may hinder its outbreak; but evil lusts are there, ready to carry away the impulsive and headstrong beyond all bounds.

The Lord Jesus is in every way the Saviour, not from divine punishment only but from sins. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences according to the riches of God's grace. But in Him we have life also, life eternal, for He is the Son, and gives nothing less than this life to everyone that believes on Him. And life in Christ is the indispensable basis of the new nature, and of our new relationships and duties, affections and privileges, crowned since

redemption with the indwelling Spirit for the Christian and for the church, that both might have an immediate link with God and power from Him.

Is the flesh then gone in fact? By no means; but it is gone for faith, as condemned by God in Christ's cross, where our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin. We are entitled therefore to say henceforth, that we died with Him, not only to and from sin, but from the religious elements of the world and its philosophy; and our life is hid with Him in God. We are not of the world as He is not; and we await His coming, not to be unclothed, as we are at death, but to be clothed upon (2 Cor. v.) with our eternal house from heaven, when the mortal shall be swallowed up of life. Meanwhile we are exhorted and bound to mortify our members which are upon the earth, instead of gratifying unclean lust or passion; also to put off those of violence, and not to lie one to another. We have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man that is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him that created him. Thus Christ is the all, and in all.

But for practice everything turns on our dependence by faith on Christ every day and all through it. Nor is anything more dangerous or ruinous than the highest truth without such dependence. Apart from Him we can do nothing, On the other hand, If ye abide in Me, and I in you, ye shall ask

what ye will, and it shall come to pass to you. So even the Ephesian saints, addressed in the most elevated of the Pauline Epistles, were told, Let the stealer steal no more. Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth. Be not drunk with wine wherein is riot and debauchery. What dishonour to the Lord, what pleasure to Satan, that they should be entrapped into these evils or even worse! What need to be kept of God! For these words of the apostle were addressed to saints already led on to the highest privileges, blessed as it is said with every spiritual blessing in Christ, and this in the heavenlies.

Such blessing is the fruit of sovereign grace in its fullest exercise. So it is that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ put honour on the Son and His work of redemption, just after His earthly people sought His shame even to the death of the cross. After this it was in divine wisdom that, as the Jews thus cut themselves off from, by adding to their old idolatry their still more guilty rejection of, their own Messiah, God brought out the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. If Satan united unbelieving Jew and Gentile in crucifying the Lord of glory, God united as the new wonder believing Jew and Gentile in one body by the Spirit, the body here below of Christ the heavenly Head at His own right hand.

But the flesh in each member remains incurably bad. Grace does not ameliorate, but makes us a new creation in Christ, as God condemned sin in the flesh when Jesus who knew no sin was made

sin for us on the tree. Thus we can say that we died to sin with Him, as we are now in Him who is risen and glorified. Therefore are we called to our new life by the faith of Him, and to treat every movement of sin in our members as vile, and inconsistent with our new relationship as Christians.

CHAPTER XI.

ISRAEL'S PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

Lev. xx. 22-27.

THE closing paragraph of the chapter is of a more general character, and opens with that obedience to which Israel was called. The law given through Moses defined it. If Jehovah called a people to be His, they must be conformed to His word. They had to learn that, being sinners, they had no power to please Him, but continually failed. If they kept not His covenant and refused to walk in His law; if they forgot His doings, and His wondrous works that He had shown them in Egypt, in the desert, and in the land of Canaan, still less did they judge themselves and remember His promises or look on to the Messiah in faith. And thus their unbelief has brought on them the sad fate, to be driven out of the goodly land as the Amorite should have been before them. Can they deny its righteousness? It was not only Israel greedily lapsing into idolatry as keenly as the Gentiles, but even Judah's favoured remnant sent back to their land by Cyrus according to the prophets guilty of rejecting their own Messiah, and the chief priests professing the apostasy of the people in the renegade sentence, "We have no king but Cæsar." What could God do to them in

adequate retribution, but send the Romans to take away both their place and their nation?

Nevertheless scripture is no less clear that, if God tells us the sad tale of their ruin through trusting themselves and unbelief of His grace, He will surely and soon work for His own glory in the Messiah risen and exalted to prove Himself their merciful and faithful Saviour God. For He will restore health to His people, in spite of the multitude of their iniquity, and will heal them of their wounds however deserved. Do men call them an outcast, and say that none cares for Zion? Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will turn again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and will have compassion on his dwelling-places, and city and palace and temple shall rise never more to fall as long as earth endures. And everlasting joy shall be theirs under the reign of Jehovah-Jesus. Nor shall they be small but exalted beyond all nations, and their oppressors punished by Jehovah. Not the Jews only, but all the families of Israel shall be His people as they never were, and He their God in sovereign mercy rejoicing over judgment.

But here we have the humbling story of their responsibility before they are brought to say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah's name. No believer should wonder that "this generation" came to nought—that such a fig-tree bore no fruit, nothing but leaves. Grace will create a generation to come. No doubt that sovereign grace has called in us of the Gentiles who believe, while the Jew holds out in his incredulity; but the same grace

will bless them, beginning with a remnant when we are caught up, and issuing, after awful judgments which cut off the wicked, in His people being righteous and mighty, the days of their mourning ended for ever.

“²² And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all my judgments and do them, that the land whither I bring you to dwell therein vomit you not out. ²³ And ye shall not walk in the customs of the nation which I cast out before you; for all these things they did, and therefore I abhorred them. ²⁴ And I said to you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you for a possession, a land flowing with milk and honey: I [am] Jehovah your God who separated you from the peoples. ²⁵ And ye shall make a separation between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast or by bird, or by anything which creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. ²⁶ And ye shall be holy to me; for I Jehovah am holy, and have separated you from the peoples that ye should be mine. ²⁷ And if there be a man or a woman in whom is necromancy or soothsaying, they shall certainly be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood [is] upon them” (vers. 22-27).

Yet there stands written not less indelibly the history of Israel in flagrant derelictions, notwithstanding a patience on Jehovah's part as admirable as it is affecting. They fell in their way like Adam

in his. And Christendom has followed not less but more than man or Israel. Happy they who find in the Second man the only refuge, salvation, and rest for the guilty and lost. "This is the victory which hath gained the victory over the world—our faith. And who is he that gaineth the victory over the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Those who looked for His coming alone sought to please God in heeding His statutes and doing them. They abhorred the unnatural horrors of Canaan. They felt God's goodness in giving them the land flowing with milk and honey. They bowed to each mark in daily life whereby He had severed them from their heathen neighbours, and recognised that they were bound to be holy to Him, because He was holy who separated them from all peoples to be His people. And their hearts would go with His burning anger against such as in the face of all lent themselves to the old enemy in necromancy and soothsaying as unworthy to live in His land.

The great error of foes, and even friends sometimes, lies in making this to be a question for Christians. It was really so for Israel. Christians are a heavenly people, with a calling on high, which the New Testament defines and expounds. Their responsibility is wholly distinct, being under grace, not law, as Israel was, if we defer to the authority of the apostle of the Gentiles, as we surely ought. Yet it is our privilege to profit by the teaching of the older scriptures, and to draw

out the divine principles which underlie even the least shadow of the Levitical economy.

But we stand on a ground different from that of Israel. The coming of the Son of God and accomplishment of redemption made the way for this. The rent veil has for the present closed the Mosaic system, and opened the door for the better hope by which we draw nigh to God, as no Jew could. We are now free and exhorted to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus. He is become surety of a better covenant. There are moral truths which ever abide as faith in God and obedience of His will; but as Israel had marked peculiarities, so has the church what rises immeasurably higher, and distinct even from what Israel will have in the day of the millennial glory. However blessed, and they will be so richly, they do not cease to be an earthly people in that day. We are even now heavenly, according to 1 Cor. xv. 48; and then we shall bear the image of the Heavenly One, instead of suffering with Him here till He come again.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is very express on this change, owing to the slowness of the saints who had been Jews to appreciate the "new" wine. Nor is this indisposition at all confined to Israelites; it is to man's heart natural, which grace is not. For as the Lord Himself said, No one having drunk old wine wishes for new, for he saith, The old is better (or, good). But those accustomed to a religion from God, like the Jews, found especial difficulty in receiving higher truth. Hence the assiduous care in that Epistle to show from first

to last the superiority of that which is presented to our faith in Christ, the Son at the right hand of the majesty on high, after having made purification of sins. God provided (or, foresaw) some better thing for us.

CHAPTER XII.

SANCTITY IN THE PRIESTS.

Lev. xxi. 1-9.

HERE are given injunctions for securing holiness in the Aaronic priesthood. They are of course of a fleshly sort like the priests themselves; but as usual they shadow better things, when Christ came the High priest of good things to come; then the priesthood being changed, there was made of necessity a change also of the law.

“¹And Jehovah said to Moses, Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, There shall none defile himself for a dead one (soul) among his peoples, ²except for his kin that is near to him—for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother; ³and for his sister a virgin, that is near to him, who hath had no husband, for her he may defile himself. ⁴He shall not make himself unclean, [being] a chief among his peoples, to profane himself. ⁵They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. ⁶They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the fire-offerings of Jehovah, the bread of their God; therefore shall they

be holy. ⁷They shall not take to wife a harlot or one dishonoured; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband; for he is holy to his God. ⁸And thou shalt sanctify him; for the bread of thy God he offereth; he shall be holy to thee; for I, Jehovah, who sanctify you, am holy. ⁹And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, she profaneth her father; she shall be burnt with fire" (vers. 1-9).

As duties flow from relationships, so do the first rise according to the second. It was because the sons of Aaron were priests and entered into the sanctuary as no ordinary Israelite could, that these ordinances were imposed on the sacerdotal family. For the first of all obligations is to God, who gives added weight to all the rest. Hence as God was unknown to the heathen, their ethics (and they are the moral code of philosophers to this day) were fundamentally defective. Israel too, being under law, might pursue but could not attain, just because it was "a law" of righteousness they pursued. It was of works, not of faith. Law works out, not love, but wrath. Therefore says the apostle, unlike those of faith, such as are of law-works are under the curse, instead of being blessed with the faithful Abraham. But the Christian has now (as the same apostle intimates in Rom. iv.) the great advantage over even him, that Abraham did not go beyond promise, for no more then could be. He was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform; wherefore also it was accounted to him for righteousness. But we believe

on Him that raised from out of the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justification. The gospel is not mere promise but accomplishment, which much enhances the grace that is now enjoyed by faith.

We see then that the priest must not defile himself by approach to death, save for the near of kin which were carefully defined. Others might incur the effect; but it was not compatible with such as drew near to God's presence, the living God. For his immediate relation, he might defile himself: this the law suffered (2-4), for it made nothing perfect. But they must not, like the heathen, make baldness upon their head, nor shave off the corner of the beard, nor cut into their flesh, as those did who had no hope. God was in none of their thoughts which were ruled by demons, and these last excesses were forbidden to Israelites in general. They profaned the name of their God, and were intolerable in those who presented the fire-offerings of Jehovah, the bread of their God as He graciously called them.

But some living ones were also forbidden to the priests: a harlot, a dishonoured woman under a cloud, or one put away. Whatever wives might be for others, the priest was holy to his God. And Moses was charged to sanctify him, as the highest authority in Israel: so his estimation was required in Lev. xxvii. 2, 4. His fellows might be too flexible in such exigencies.

There was another possibility provided against: the priest's daughter might profane not herself only

but her father by playing the harlot. This drew out the terrible doom of burning her with fire. Jehovah is not mocked but sanctified in those that are near Him. It is divine government for those under law.

Now the only priests Christianity recognises are the confessors of Christ. They are a holy and a royal priesthood. The Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts them in the use of more than Aaronic privilege, as do the apostles John and Peter. It is the unbelieving pride of theology to apply priesthood to the gifts of Christ or to local charges as elders. Not once do we find this in the N. T. which in spirit and letter so designates every Christian. There is no such application to ministers in the word. Their function *from* God is to preach to the world, or to teach the saints. Priests have the wholly distinct place of drawing near *to* God in prayer and praise, offering up "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." They are therefore bound to keep clear of spiritual death, and leave the dead to bury their dead. They are to reckon themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus, their consciences purified from dead works for religious service of a living God. Christ is now their life who by His death and resurrection gives them the victory. All things are theirs, not life only but death, things present and things to come. Even Christ's judgment-seat has no terror for them, but awakens earnest pity and zeal to persuade the perishing for whom they know how awful it will be, unless they repent and believe the gospel.

But the Jewish priests of old, the sons of Aaron, were the enemies of the Lord beyond the infatuated people; they and the voices of the chief priests prevailed against the less hardened, the heathen, Pilate. They are now broken off the olive tree and have lost their standing till mercy work their revival at the close. Hence as there is the setting aside of the commandment going before for its weakness and unprofitableness, the way lay open for the introduction of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God. Christians exclusively are priests now by virtue of Christ's work and God's call. To make ministers such, and even of a higher grade, is ominously like the gainsaying of Korah: the presumption of the Levite to take the place of, not the Great Priest only, but of any priest whatever. As priests are we called of God, not to uncleanness in any way or degree, but in sanctification as the condition that characterises the partakers of a heavenly calling.

It is here, we may notice, that evangelicalism is so short. Rarely does any one nurtured in that school get beyond the denial of priesthood now save Christ's. But it is of importance to press the positive truth, that every Christian is a priest to God now. It will be said that he is a priest spiritually; and the concession is just the truth. There are no priests now save of a spiritual kind. Christianity knows of none formal or fleshly. Every Christian has an indefeasable title to draw near into the only sanctuary, and through the only efficacious sacrifice which God recognises. And

all are called to exercise this the only real title, existing on earth, habitually. In Heb. x. 19, &c., it is set out with great plainness of speech.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HIGH PRIEST TO BE UNSULLIED.

Lev. xxi. 10-15.

HERE it is not the general sanctity of the Aaronic line, but the holy character incumbent on their chief because of the anointing of his God.

“¹⁰ And the priest that is greater than his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head (or let the hair of his head go loose), nor rend his garments. ¹¹ Neither shall he come near any person dead, nor make himself unclean for his father nor for his mother. ¹² Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration (or crown) of the anointing oil of his God [is] upon him: I [am] Jehovah. ¹³ And he shall take a wife in her virginity. ¹⁴ A widow or a divorced woman or one dishonoured, a harlot, these shall he not take; but he shall take as wife a virgin from among his peoples. ¹⁵ And he shall not profane his seed among his peoples; for I Jehovah sanctify him” (vers. 10-15).

It is not merely as the highest of the sacerdotal that these injunctions were bid. The Spirit of God does not fail to keep before us, even in the O.T.

when the first man was being put to the test, that He ever looks on to the Second. Thereby the believing reader, who believes in spirit while the letter is seen, was also taught to look for Him. So we saw in the early part of Lev. iv. as compared with the rest. Again, a similar principle is observable in chap. viii., not in a negative way but more positive, in the anointing itself. Further, though in a still more different manner, we may discern in the singular place of the great priest on the atonement day (Lev. xvi.). And so is it here also.

Literally the anointed priest must not yield to the exigencies of mourning or the defilement of death, no, not for his father or for his mother, whose honour is so specially maintained in the Ten Words. In Christ as Priest we have superiority to death made most conspicuous. Nor is it only in the striking type of Melchizedek and his "order," as we see it applied in Heb. vii. for which the mode of notifying the royal priest of Salem gave occasion: "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Even when the exercise of priesthood is introduced according to the Aaronic pattern, the priesthood that does not pass to another is pressed, as constituting Him able to save completely those that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them: an element as foreign to Melchizedek as offering sacrifice or burning incense.

Next he was not to go out of the sanctuary,

nor profane the sanctuary of his God. This was as absolutely true of the Lord in every respect, as it could not be of any other. For He was the Heavenly One; yea even on earth, He could be, and He describes Himself as, the Son of Man who *is* in heaven; "was" or "will be" falls quite short of this reality in a divine person. He was indeed the Holy One of God: so even unclean spirits could not but own, as this was to them the source of their deepest awe and alarm.

Then he was restricted as to the choice of a wife. A widow or divorced woman, or one dishonoured, a harlot, was expressly forbidden. He was to take as wife a virgin from his peoples. Need one say how God provides the church which He loved for the nuptials of the Lamb above? Here He will present to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. It is true that she had nothing but sins. But He gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. It was all His suffering, and doing, and giving, in a love with which nothing can compare. It is as sure by His work for redemption as His blood has infinite value in God's eyes, Who had this purpose of grace before the world's foundation, as He has accomplished the deepest and most wondrous part and made it known for the blessing and joy of faith, and is about to fulfil all that remains for the body and the inheritance in due time, a time that hastens. "For such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and

become higher than the heavens; who hath not need day by day, as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, then for those of the people; for this he did once for all, having offered up himself. For the law constituteth men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the swearing that is after the law, a Son perfected for ever" (Heb. vii. 26-28).

CHAPTER XIV. .

A DEFECTIVE PRIEST.

Lev. xxi. 16-24.

THE law made nothing perfect. Priests and people were alike liable to blemish of all kinds. Hence, even if of Aaron's line, such might be forbidden to serve in the sanctuary.

“¹⁶And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷Speak to Aaron, saying, Whoever of thy seed throughout their generations that hath a defect, he shall not approach to present the bread of his God. ¹⁸For whatever man hath a defect, he shall not approach : a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or one limb longer than the other ; ¹⁹or a man that is broken-footed, or broken-handed ; ²⁰or hump-backed, or a dwarf, or that hath a spot in his eye, or is scurvy or scabbed, or hath his testicles broken. ²¹No man of the seed of Aaron the priest that hath defect shall come near to present Jehovah's fire-offerings : he hath a defect ; he shall not come near to present the bread of his God. ²²He shall eat the bread of his God, [both] of the most holy and of the holy. ²³Only he shall not come in unto the veil, nor shall he draw near unto the altar, for he hath a defect, that he profane not my holy things (or sanctuaries) ; for I Jehovah sanctify them. ²⁴And Moses told

[it] to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the sons of Israel" (vers. 16-24).

The sons of Aaron were thus compelled to take note of that which became the presence and service of their God. They had no immunity from the effects of sin over a ruined world and in a ruined race. Their descent from Aaron or Abram availed not against the rights of Jehovah. They shared the consequences of the fall with the Gentiles, even the most debased and idolatrous. Some defects might be life-long; others only for a season; but while these defects lasted, they were bound not to approach, and their brethren not to suffer it, if themselves were impious enough to presume.

But the N. T. brings before us an incomparably higher standard. Aaron himself (however free from the specified defects, and if he had never been compromised in the molten calf which he had fashioned with a chisel from the gold the people gave him to make them a god, yea, if he had never been guilty of a single fault) was wholly beneath the Anointed Priest whom God had in view, the great High priest passed as He has through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who sits on the throne of grace, that we approaching with boldness may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help. In Heb. v. the distinction is pointed out with a firm and precise hand. "For every high priest being taken from among men is constituted for men in things relating to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; being able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since

he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and on account of this he is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no one taketh this honour to himself, but one called by God even as Aaron also."

Think of the blind temerity in reputed Christians of great learning and ability, who applied this to the Lord Jesus, instead of perceiving that it is the contrast of the Jewish high priest, who was only man and needed to offer a sin-offering for himself quite as much as for the people. Whatever the analogy, here as elsewhere, the express aim is to mark His blessed superiority. Even He did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest, but after His worth was saluted by God as such for ever according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. cx.), as He was owned to be His Son when begotten in time (Ps. ii. 7, 12), being Son in the Godhead eternally as shewn in the Gospel and Epistles of John. His priesthood was founded on His Person, born here, as Son of God; as Ps. cx. declares His office as addressed to Him with the oath of God and connected with His sitting at God's right hand. Here it may be observed that His being man is, as before in chap. ii. 17, 18, introduced most touchingly to show how eminently fitted He is from His experience in the days of His flesh to feel for His tried and needy ones whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. No one fathomed the anguish as He who never spared Himself but glorified God at all cost; He who as a Divine Person spoke and it was done, commanded and it stood fast, learnt

(how new a thing to Him!) obedience, and in the deepest way, from the things which He suffered, and, having been perfected, became author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him.

Nor is it different now with those that are His, notwithstanding their old nature of enmity against God, aggravated by wicked works, and having still that old man which never improves and needs to be mortified as it was also crucified with Him. Yet this same Epistle testifies that both He that sanctifies (Christ) and those sanctified (Christians) are all of one; as other epistles develop, in varied terms appropriate to the bearing of each, the abundant grace in which we stand by Him, having had it by faith and still having it. For we received not a spirit of bondage again (as once) to fear, but a spirit of sonship whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself, that convinced us of our guilt and of indwelling sin, bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Hence, through His redemption and a new creation in Him, we are entitled to say, The old things are passed; behold, new things are come in; and all things are of the God that reconciled us to Himself through Christ. The same death of Christ has rent the veil, which, instead of keeping us without, is to the Christian a new and living way in. We have therefore boldness for entering into the sanctuary in perfect peace, which even Aaron never

possessed typically, having to take the utmost care on rare occasion lest he should die.

Nor is it only the Epistle to the Hebrews which thus affirms for Christ an incomparably better priesthood, and implies our own priestly access in chap. x. The apostle Peter also in the second chapter of his First Epistle distinctly says that, coming to the Lord, the true and living Stone, we as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ. Indeed the N.T. now acknowledges no other priesthood besides. Gentile priesthood never had a divine sanction; and Jewish priesthood now has emphatically His curse, through despising that blood which has blotted out our manifold defects. For whatever we were (and we were, each in His own way, all far from God, hateful and hating, false and foul), we are now washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Indeed the Epistles of Paul as a whole, from that to the Roman saints to that for the Hebrews, are explicit that every Christian has a far better title of nearness to God than the sons of Aaron, or Aaron himself. But it is spiritual yet most real; whereas the Jewish was type and shadow, and has now lost all value in God's sight. Ignorance and unbelief set up a vain imitation in Christendom.

Our last surviving apostle attests the same priestly privilege for the believer now. "To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God

and Father : to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen " (Rev. i. 5, 6). Christ is the High priest ; Christians the priests. Any priesthood besides is now grievous sin and mere imposture. By one offering Christ has perfected continuously the sanctified. There is no defective or blemished person in the Christian priesthood. He was ever perfect morally ; we are perfected by His one offering. It is not a question of flaws in walk.

CHAPTER XV.

PRIESTLY PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

Lev. xxii. 1-16.

THIS chapter continues, as in the preceding, the like strain of imperative sanctification in the priestly family to Jehovah. Here it is not indelible disqualifications, as in the last section, but passing defilements. But no defilement was to be treated as a light thing. Reverence was due to Him who is a consuming fire. His will and word ruled all, and especially such as drew near to Him.

“¹And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ²Speak to Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name [in] what they hallow to me: I [am] Jehovah. ³Say to them, Whosoever of all your seed among your generations that goeth unto the holy things which the children of Israel hallow to Jehovah, having his uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I [am] Jehovah. ⁴Whatsoever man of the seed of Aaron [is] a leper, or hath a running of the reins, shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean; and whosoever toucheth anything unclean of the dead, or a man whose seed passeth from him; ⁵ or whosoever toucheth any rep-

tile whereby he may be made unclean, or a man from whom he may take uncleanness whatsoever uncleanness he hath; ⁶the person that hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. ⁷And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things, because it [is] his food. ⁸That which dieth of itself, or is torn, he shall not eat to defile himself with it: I [am] Jehovah. ⁹They shall therefore keep mine ordinance lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I Jehovah sanctify them. ¹⁰No stranger shall eat the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest, or a hired servant shall not eat the holy thing. ¹¹But if the priest buy a person with his money, he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house; they shall eat of his meat. ¹²If the priest's daughter also belong to a strange man, she may not eat of an offering of the holy things. ¹³But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat; but no stranger shall eat of it. ¹⁴And if a man eat the holy thing unwittingly, then he shall put the fifth thereof to it, and shall offer [it] to the priest with the holy thing. ¹⁵And they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer to Jehovah; ¹⁶or suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass when they eat their holy things; for I Jehovah sanctify them" (chap. xxii. 1-16).

The care with which Moses was charged by

Jehovah, and the sons of Aaron through him, is most impressive (1, 2). Compromise in divine things is hateful to God. It is the boast of men, and especially in these days where liberalism is the popular idol, in opposition to the old idol of man's tradition and sacerdotalism, which theoretically is unbending but in practice accommodating enough for a tariff of sin. The priests of Jehovah were bound under the strictest obligation not to profane His holy name in the holy things of Israel.

There might be uncleanness from day to day known only to each priest himself. Conscience was thus tested, and the fear of God. He might easily hide his uncleanness from his fellows, and from the children of Israel; but he could only do so at the peril of being cut off from Jehovah's presence (3). His being of Aaron's seed gave him no sanctuary shelter; but the contrary, whether he suffered from leprosy, or an issue from the reins, or even from the touch of the dead, or of one under an unclean infirmity, or of a defiling reptile, or the like. The variety or the degree might differ; but Jehovah tolerates no uncleanness in those that draw nigh. He must at least be unclean till evening, and not eat of the holy things till he wash his flesh with water. After that he was free to eat of them; for the Holy One is merciful and gracious (4-8).

Jehovah is the living God. Death is sin's wages; not all indeed, for judgment remains as every Christian should know, Christ revealing the whole truth. Hence the touch of death defiled anyone;

much more the priest. No Israelite was free to eat even what was torn of beasts of the field, but called to cast it to the dogs (Exodus xxii. 31). "I [am] Jehovah" debarred the sons of Aaron beyond all. They were therefore to keep His ordinance, lest they should bear sin and die in their profanation. He sanctified them pre-eminently (9).

But the inverse was equally binding and expressed. No stranger was to eat the holy thing. He who separated Israel to Himself separated the priest by a closer severance. A sojourner of the priest even had no licence, nor a hired servant however at home or valued. But one that belonged to the priest, bought or born in his house, was allowed that privilege: they might eat of his meat (10, 11).

Then we have modified cases distinctly provided for. Were the priest's daughter married to a strange man (*i.e.* outside the Aaronic family), she forfeited for the while her title to eat of an offering of the holy things. But if she became a widow, or divorced, without a child, back in her father's house as in her youth, she resumed her title, and might eat of her father's meat; she was no longer a forbidden stranger (12, 13).

Again (14), a man might eat the holy thing unwittingly, and in this case he was enjoined to add the fifth of it, and to give it to the priest with the holy thing, as a double tithe of trespass. There was no superstition or human exaggeration. The true God must of necessity be a jealous God; yet He weighed all considerately.

But as we began with the responsibility attached to the priests, so this section ends. They in particular were not to profane the holy things of the children of Israel which they offered to Jehovah, nor to lade themselves with the iniquity of trespass in eating their holy things, remembering that Jehovah it was that sanctified. Alas! it was just here they failed, not only as we have seen before their consecration was complete, but more and more till they became leaders, not only in profanation but in the grossest impurity (1 Sam. ii. 12-22). And the prophetic word through a man of God came, that the high priest's sons should both die in one day, and that Jehovah would raise up a faithful priest to do according to what was in His heart and in His mind, for whom He would build a sure house, Himself as King before His anointed for ever. Messiah is the only full answer to both Priest and King.

We as Christians know Him in a still more glorious position, not only in heaven but at the right hand of God on His throne. And we know Him as the Eternal Son, not merely as His Son in time, and as Son of man crowned with glory and honour. It is not, it is true, the many diadems of the world to come, but the chaplet of a deeper and higher victory than those to be achieved and displayed in that day when the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. For it is ours to approach with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help (Heb. iv. 16).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering the holies in virtue of the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which he dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and [having] a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having been sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to the body with pure water” (Heb. x. 19-22).

CHAPTER XVI.

SANCTIFICATION REQUIRED OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

Lev. xxii. 17-25.

THESE verses join the sons of Aaron with the children of Israel in the injunctions of Jehovah the Mediator.

“¹⁷ And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ Speak to Aaron and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, If there be any man of the house of Israel, or of the sojourners in Israel, that presenteth his gift (corbon) for any of his voluntary offerings which they present to Jehovah as a burnt offering, ¹⁹ it shall be accepted for you without blemish, a male of the oxen, of the sheep, and of the goats. ²⁰ Whatsoever hath a blemish shall ye not offer, for it shall not be acceptable for you. ²¹ And when a man offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings to Jehovah as a vow or an offering of the herds or of the flocks, it shall be without blemish to be accepted: no defect shall be therein. ²² Blind or broken or maimed or ulcerous or scurvy or scabbed, ye shall not offer these to Jehovah; and a fire offering shall ye not make of these on the altar to Jehovah. ²³ A bullock and a sheep (or goat) that hath any limb superfluous or lacking that mayest thou offer as a voluntary

offering ; but as a vow it shall not be accepted. ²⁴ That which is bruised or crushed or broken or cut shall ye not present to Jehovah ; neither in your land shall ye do (so). ²⁵ And from a stranger's hand shall ye not offer the bread of your God from any of these ; because their corruption [is] in them ; a blemish [is] in them : they shall not be accepted for you " (vers. 17-25).

We can readily understand how prone the people were to forget His honour and all-seeing eye in presenting as an offering for His altar what was damaged or defective ; and how disposed the priest would be to wink at such artifices. It was really a heinous transgression, and in effect denied His being the living God. Was the God of Israel such a one as His selfish and professed worshippers ? This is indeed what sin implies ; and especially in divine things.

But let us remember how much more wicked it is in a Christian whose very profession is to walk in the light as God is in the light. The true light already shines. Though not under law like Israel, we, once darkness, are made light in the Lord and are called to appear luminaries in a squalid world, holding forth the word of life. Surely we ought not to be in our relationship less careful than a Jew in his : the least that became either was to be honest before God and man. If not, the less we speak of grace, the better ; nothing condemns looseness so much as the true grace of God.

Yet even the law tolerated a lower note in a voluntary peace offering, because man was there

allowed an unusual place. Leavened bread, besides the unleavened cakes mingled with oil, was presented with the sacrifice of his peace offering of thanksgiving. But for a vow it was forbidden, as being strictly to Jehovah. Yet neither in wilderness nor in promised land was any thing abnormal permissible for acceptance. An unblemished male was imperative, as representing the Holy one of God. And a stranger had no more licence than an Israelite.

How plain that in every way perfection was not in, nor by, the Levitical priesthood. It was given of God provisionally for an earthly people, a dying priesthood for a dying people; for the people had the law given based upon it. If there had been perfection thereby, what need still that a different priest should arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be named according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there cometh to pass of necessity a change also of the law. . . . And it is yet more abundantly manifest, if according to the likeness of Melchizedek a different priest ariseth who hath not been constituted according to a law of fleshly commandment but according to power of indissoluble life. For he is testified, Thou [art] priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek. For there cometh to pass a disannulling of foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and an inbringing of a better hope through which we draw near to God. Heb. vii.

CHAPTER XVII.

ISRAEL'S SANCTIFICATION.

Lev. xxii. 26-33.

THESE are communications of Jehovah with a supplement of a general kind, and therefore spoken to Moses simply, not to the sons of Aaron as well as Aaron as in 1-16, and to Aaron and his sons, as well as to the sons of Israel as in 17-25. High priest and priests must beware of uncleanness on them in approaching to the holy things, on pain of being cut off from before Jehovah, for He it is that hallows them. But the offerers of any offering, vow or voluntary, must beware of defect in what they present. It is wholly unacceptable. To these rules is now added a final word.

“²⁶ And Jehovah spake to Moses, saying, ²⁷ An ox, or a sheep, or a goat, when it is brought forth, shall be seven days under its dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted as a fire offering to Jehovah. ²⁸ A cow or sheep—it and its young—shall ye not slaughter in one day. ²⁹ And when ye sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Jehovah, ye shall sacrifice for your acceptance. ³⁰ On that day shall it be eaten; ye shall leave none of it until morning: I [am] Jehovah.

³¹ And ye shall observe my commandments and

do them: I [am] Jehovah. ²² And ye shall not profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I [am] Jehovah that hallow you, ²³ that brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I [am] Jehovah" (vers. 26-33).

"To everything is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heavens." Man, Israelite, Christian, is apt to mistake. Besides, his true place is subjection and obedience. God Himself has an aim before Him which He puts before us. He would glorify the Second man whom the first is so prone to forget, even when he intends to honour God, who alone can judge infallibly of what pleases Him, and graciously lets us know it for our acquiescence.

Here the animal, when brought forth, must be seven days under its dam. It was otherwise in nature. The Jews say a sabbath must pass over it. Jehovah says from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted. It is not the test of creation or of the law which is the grand point, important as both are, but the witness of the all-important resurrection day, when He rose who is the Beginning, not the first but the Last Adam, Firstborn from among the dead, that *He* might have in all things the foremost place. Is it not His due?

Another injunction follows: "a cow or a sheep—it, and its young—shall ye not slaughter in one day." Jehovah cultivates seemliness in His people. If He commanded sacrifice strictly and reverently, it was both to make guilt and self-will felt and

confessed, and yet more the One Saviour and only sacrifice of efficacy for sin before Him. But He also would have delicacy of feeling, even when a dumb or dead beast was concerned, as when He forbade seething a kid in the milk of its dam. All scripture is against the coarse brutality habitual to the heathen who knew not the true God.

Further, a sacrifice of thanksgiving, as involving right feelings and human sympathy, must be eaten on the same day; it must not be longer severed from the altar, and offering up, and Jehovah Himself: "I am Jehovah." It is the salt that keeps pure. There must be faith, yet more than feeling which is human and at best evanescent.

How solemn, too, the repeated seal impressed on observing and doing His commands, "I am Jehovah." Obedience is thus demanded, as profaning His holy name is quite forbidden, that He might be hallowed in His people. For indeed it was Jehovah hallowing them, He that brought them out of the land of Egypt to be their God: I am Jehovah. Such was their place as His people here below on the earth, a witness to the nations. Can any thing indeed be more empty from the nature of the case than the profession of God's name without habitual reference to His word and obeying His will? Even an earthly law has its sanction if infringed, and what people call passive resistance is active evil and folly. Can men who profess the true God forget the solemnity of an everlasting judgment, not for ungodly deeds only but for ungodly words, as if they were independent

of God, and their tongues or aught else were their own? If they walk in the ways of their defiled and defiling heart, and in the sight of their eyes which turn from the word of God, is it not indisputably just that for all these things God should bring men into judgment? How much more for despising His saving grace in Christ, which has appeared to all men, and enjoins men, that they all everywhere should repent and believe the glad tidings!

But O the love to us who through mercy believe already! Our place is deliverance out of this present evil age for association with Christ, not merely to reign with Him, but to be with Him where He is in the Father's house. It is heavenly. We are not of the world as Christ is not.

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